"During the winter they obtain all their water from snow, being ignorant apparently of the fact that ordinary sea ice loses its salinity with age, and that an old cake of the previous winter will yield perfectly fresh water. They never use the sea ice themselves, and I never heard them remark on our use of it at Bernard harbour (perhaps they thought it was fresh-water ice), but the Rev. Mr. Girling tells me that they were astonished at the missionaries obtaining all their drinking water from it, and refused to believe at first that it would not taste saline. This ignorance is the more remarkable as they are well aware of the fact that fresh water can be obtained from the spongy ice found in old seal-holes during the spring. They came on such a seal-hole in May, 1915, when they were migrating to the land. It was only about a foot in diameter, and concealed beneath a layer of snow; beside it, but still under the surface of the snow was the small cavity or chamber in which the young seal had been nourished. Fragments of melting ice were floating on the surface of the water; the natives merely let them drain for two or three seconds, after which they tasted perfectly fresh.

In spring, when they are camped beside a lake, the Eskimos naturally fill their water-buckets from one of the fishing-holes. The hunter resorts to various devices. Often there are large boulders embedded in the ice on the margins of ponds, protruding a little above the surface. The stone is warmed by the rays of the sun and melts some of the ice around its edges, when the hunter has merely to chip away a little of the surface

ice in order to reach the water. If there is too little for him to suck up with his lips he dips in a piece of snow, which will absorb the water like a sponge. This absorptive power of snow is utilized by the natives for removing fresh blood stains from skins and furs."

2: Stefansson--78 (1908-1912) 1914 Copper Eskimo
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"Nearness of water is not of much concern in choosing a summer campsite, for good water is found almost anywhere during the Arctic summer, even on top the salt sea ice."

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

LENGTHENING DAYS

The Eskimos, who were greatly amused at my ignorance of everything pertaining to sealing, now scored another laugh at my expense. As we gazed down into the seal-hole one of them asked me whether I intended to drink from it. The joke seemed so obvious that I answered rather casually, "No. I do not care to drink salt sea-water." But the men around me smiled, and my questioner, kneeling down, scooped up a handful of slush ice that was floating on the surface, let it drain through his fingers for a moment, and swallowed it with gusto. Still doubting, I tested the ice myself; it was perfectly fresh, being simply the pure snow above converted into slush when it fell into the water.

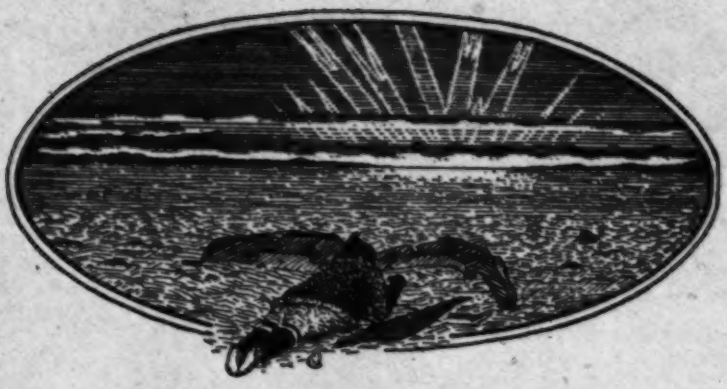
The only hardship we suffered on these journeys was thirst, caused by the want of liquids in our diet. We breakfasted on cold boiled seal meat left over from our supper, dragged the heavy sleds from ten to fifteen miles, and re-erected the cumbersome tents at the conclusion of the march; then, when the day's work was ended, we sat down to our second meal, and received from the cooking-pot another ration of seal meat. No fruit, no vegetables; morning and night nothing but seal meat washed down with ice-cold water or hot broth. The pot of tea I made as soon as the tents were erected gave little relief to so many parched throats. One man drank two large cups of soup, two of tea, and nine of ice-cold water, all within the space

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

almost devoid of vegetation. We stumbled over a bed of dolomite split by frost into rectangular blocks, its resemblance to the floor of an ancient temple heightened by two stone pillars erected several years before to support a kayak or hunting canoe. A mile or two beyond a caribou caught our scent, whisked up its tail, and bounded out of sight behind a low ridge. We could see a fair-sized stream in the distance tumbling among the rocks; and there Ikpuck instructed us to camp while he pursued the caribou that had just disappeared. Twelve hours later, when every one was asleep, he returned, and, pushing open the door of my tent, displayed the skins of two caribou; their carcasses he had left side by side for the women to bring in, merely aligning some boulders on top of a knoll to guide them in their search. Icehouse and Jennie dressed and departed immediately with dogs and packlines. The howling of the other dogs aroused the camp, and a second party went out to look for more caribou. So, for one reason and another, we lingered in this spot nearly three days.

Instead of hunting during this interval, I made a collection of all the plants growing around us, and enjoyed two swims in a neighbouring pool. A bath is a rare luxury in the Arctic, where there is often no water to wash even the face and hands. My companions solved the problem by never washing. Contact with the snow in winter purified them, and in

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8



CHAPTER X

DARKENING DAYS

IKPUCK chose for our tent-site a level patch of ground beside a small lake that filled a dip in the rolling plain behind Dryad Harbour. Through a hole in the ice we drew our water, and for fuel we used the dwarf willow that grew abundantly all around, or burned the yellow fat of the polar bear in a naturally hollow stone. Low ridges blocked the view on all sides, shutting out even the sea four miles away; but the ridge to the north overlooked a long valley so rich in moss that we expected the migrating caribou to make it their highway. On the crest of this ridge, therefore, we built a low semi-circular wall of stones, chinked with snow, that would both conceal and shelter the watcher; and every morning, at dawn, some one visited the look-out post to search